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SUBJECT: MINISTER ENDORSES WOMEN'S WORKING GROUP

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: During the Ambassador's farewell call on the Minister of Higher Education, the Minister highlighted the importance of her participation in the Secretary's Women Leaders' Working Group over the past two years and expressed her strong hope that this activity will continue under the new administration. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) The Ambassador met with Dr. Rawya bint Sau'ud Al Busaidi, Minister of Higher Education, on Saturday, May 16, as part of his round of ministerial farewells. Their conversation covered the range of U.S.-Oman cooperation in the field of higher education since 2006, focusing on the growth of exchanges and the opportunities for continuing partnerships as the sector continues to expand to meet Omani needs.

¶3. (U) The Minister was warm in her praise of all aspects of bilateral cooperation, but she took special care to highlight the positive effects she had seen, personally and in relation to fellow women leaders in the Gulf, of participation in the annual Women Leaders' Working Group meetings held on the margins of the UN General Assembly opening. She noted that with women in leadership in the Arab world still facing many challenges (specifically citing the recent dismissal of two female ministers in Qatar), the networking and related opportunities these meetings have made possible have been deeply valued. She added that she and other participants have noticed greater support for their work in the wake of the high-profile recognition the meetings have afforded.

¶4. (SBU) COMMENT: The usually reserved Dr. Rawya was visibly animated in discussing the Working Group. Connecting highest-level women across borders in this region is extremely challenging, and it is clear that for this Minister (the most senior and substantive woman in Omani governance) and those with whom she is in contact, participation in the Working Group and related ongoing networking have been personal lifelines and professional boons. END COMMENT.
GRAPPO